

SCHOOL FACILITIES INITIATIVE TASK FORCE SPECIAL MEETING  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2014 – 6:30 P.M.  
FITCH HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER, 101 GROTON LONG POINT ROAD

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Beaulieu, Bresnahan, Cabral, Greenleaf, Heller, Koehler, Trejo, Watson, Zod  
Staff: Reiner, Graner, Kilpatrick, Norris  
Consultant: Mike Zuba, Ali Church, David Dickson, Kemp Morhardt

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 22, 2013, January 9, 2014, and August 14, 2014

A motion was made by Trejo, seconded by Watson, to approve the minutes as written.

The motion carried unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS - None

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- a. Middle School Space Program Allocation
- b. Middle School Co-Location Concept

Mr. Zuba introduced his team and reminded the committee of progress since the May public outreach sessions.

Superintendent Graner reiterated the outcomes of the May session especially the consensus of co-locating the middle and high schools in order to facilitate the collaboration of programs, including the 6-10 “Middle Years” IB program.

Mr. Zuba announced that elementary ed specs have been approved by the Board of Education, and that Dr. Graner will introduce them at the next meeting.

Mr. Morhardt presented a presentation of the space audit of the middle school ed specs. Current ed specs are 26,139 square feet, or 27.9 square feet per student more than State Reimbursement Formula allowances.

Mr. Morhardt benchmarked specific program areas against averages for other comparable schools to show that the Groton ed specs (based on net square feet per student) are higher than average in academic space and music/performance space; lower than average in specialty learning labs and athletics space; and average in administration, visual arts, library/media/comp, food service, and special ed spaces.

Mr. Morhardt presented a graphic representation of these ed specs in the form of room type “blocks”, which were then assembled into two “test fit” building footprints, the first for a level site and the second for a sloped or steep site.

c. Site Condition Assessment

Mr. Zuba presented the context for the centrally located school sites, showing the concentrations of students throughout the Town, and the concentration of institutional facilities along Fort Hill and Groton Long Point Roads.

Mr. Dickson presented as assessment of the areas around the high school, including the Merritt Farm property. Analysis included soil types, slopes, existing facilities assessment, and distance to various parts of the properties. Additionally, parking and circulation was discussed, along with condition of existing sports facilities at the high school.

Mr. Zuba briefly discussed the deed restrictions on the Merritt property.

d. Site Feasibility Assessment

Mr. Dickson presented three potential middle school sites.

Option A places a middle school on the existing tennis courts and baseball field, south of the high school. It is relatively flat and therefore would utilize Mr. Morhardt’s “level site” building footprint. The entrance and circulation utilizes the existing drive off Groton Long Point Road.

Option B places a middle school on the existing track and field, west of the high school. It is stepped into the hill side, requiring the removal of the tennis courts, and utilizing Mr. Morhardt’s “steep site” building footprint. The entrance and circulation utilizes the existing drive off Groton Long Point Road.

Option C places a middle school on the Merritt Farm parcel, including a new entrance on Fort Hill Road, and four athletic fields on that site. There would be access to the high school property, although it could be restricted or limited access.

Mr. Zuba explained that he and Town Manager Oefinger have met with CT DEEP to discuss a process to remove the deed restrictions from the parcel and that the State has suggested it would be possible if the Committee wishes to move forward with a concept for this site.

Dr. Graner asked for clarification on this process and Mr. Zuba explained that it would require a property exchange for equally valued property in the Town. Later Mr. Reiner and Mr. Greenleaf asked for clarification if the exchange must be for one other 35+ acre parcel. Mr. Zuba clarified that the value must match, but it could theoretically be on several parcels.

Mr. Trejo discussed the education synergies of a “campus” and suggested that two buildings near each other do not inherently make a synergistic program. Mr. Greenleaf added that Options A and B seem far too congested on a site prospective but place the middle school much closer to

the high school which seems preferred. The group asked if there had been a consideration of using the Merritt site but placing the building as close to the high school as possible. Mr. Dickson and Mr. Zuba explain that a previous iteration of that had been drafted (think Option C1) and that they will revisit and present at the next meeting.

Mr. Trejo and Ms. Watson asked about the theoretical cost of adding a pool to the middle school. Mr. Heller asked if the pool “space” could replace the auditorium at the middle school because two large auditoriums so close seem redundant. The group discussed reducing the space required in the ed specs, and Mr. Morhardt explained that examining the education needs are part of the process of auditing going forward.

Mr. Norris asked that the plans examine alternative energy sources. There was clarification that the building must be LEED Silver and alternative energy will be examined.

Ms. Watson began discussion on the existing Kent + Frost park plan. There is general concern that the work done on this plan will be disregarded. Mr. Zuba clarified that the plan has been used to guide parts of this plan, and they are working with Kent +Frost going forward. It was asked who ultimately makes the decision on which plan goes forward, and it was clarified that the Council will have to approve any plan and therefore would make that decision. There was discussion that it would be best if parts of that plan could be combined with this plan to create a plan that addresses educational and recreational needs and it was clarified that that is the intention.

#### e. Next Steps

There was a motion by Mr. Trejo, seconded by Mr. Greenleaf, to continue with Concept C as a broad concept moving forward.

The motion carried unanimously.

The next meeting will be November 13<sup>th</sup>.

The group will continue to meet once per month and the schedule for 2015 should be set as soon as possible.

#### V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m.